

St. Mary's Pharmacy  
1 mi. south of Fort Owen, on west  
side of Stevensville.  
Stevensville  
Ravalli County  
Montana

HABS No. MON-11

HABS  
MONT  
41-STEVE  
2-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
801 19th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D. C. 20006

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ST. MARY'S PHARMACY

Stevensville, Ravalli County, Montana

ADDRESS: Stevensville, Montana

OWNER: The Catholic Church

OCCUPANT: None

USE: Storage

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

This low-ceilinged, two story square-hewn log structure housed the first pharmacy in operation in the Territory of Montana. Here Father Anthony Ravalli, a Jesuit priest of many talents, dispensed medicine to both Indians and white settlers of the Bitterroot Valley and tended to their physical needs.

The first floor served as Father Ravalli's medical office and pharmacy and the second floor as a hospital. The building was built during the late 1860's after St. Mary's Mission (MON-10) was re-opened in 1866.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The pharmacy building sits just north of St. Mary's Mission chapel and was part of a complex of structures built around the log church after the Mission was reactivated in 1866 when the Jesuits returned to the Bitterroot Valley following an absence of some sixteen years.

Father Ravalli accompanied Father Giorda back to the mission to help re-open it, although he was not assigned to St. Mary's Mission for several years. He was stationed at Hell's Gate some thirty-five miles north, but made frequent trips to St. Mary's. Father Ravalli was an exceptionally talented individual. In addition to his religious calling, he was an artist, architect -- having designed and built the Sacred Heart Mission, Cataldo, Idaho (ID-1) -- and was the area's first physician and pharmacist.

At St. Mary's he lived out the rest of his life, tending the spiritual and physical needs of Indians and whites. He himself became extremely ill when he answered a call for medical attention from a half frozen miner during a severe blizzard one night. A stroke followed this illness.

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Although paralyzed from the waist down for the remaining four years of his life, Father Ravalli continued to make sick calls and tend to the needs of his parishioners riding on a canvas cot mounted on a spring wagon.

An entry in the diary of Father Jerome D'Aste, the priest in charge of St. Mary's Mission at the time dated October 2, 1884, briefly stated: "Fr. Ravalli died this morning about 8 o'clock after over two months and a half of lingering and severe suffering". Father Ravalli was laid to rest in the Mission graveyard behind the Chapel among the white people and Indians that he had served for so many years.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL AND SOURCES

- Antrei, Albert, "Father Pierre Jean DeSmet", Montana, the Magazine of Western History, vol. XIII, No. 2, Spring, 1963.
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- Leeson, M. A., History of Montana, 1729-1885, Warner, Beers & Co., Chicago, 1885.
- Palladino, L. B., Indian and White in the Northwest: A History of Catholicity in Montana, 1831-1891, Wickersham Publishing Co., Lancaster, 1922.
- Schoenberg, Wilfred, S. J., Jesuits in Montana, The Oregon Jesuit (publisher), Portland, 1960.
- Stout, Tom, Montana: Its Story and Biography, vol. 3, Lewis Publishing Co., Chicago, 1913.

#### ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

##### EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions - 16'-8" x 20'-10" two story log structure.

Foundations - probably native fieldstone. Today the earth has been graded to a level that covers one or more of the logs of the exterior walls. Excavation not conducted.

Wall Construction - square-hewn logs averaging 10" in size and laid in the typical "blockhouse" log construction method. Simple planking forms the gable ends.

Openings - Entrances: The main door is on the south facade (facing towards the church building), with another door located on the east wall. Neither door is original.

Windows: There are two windows on the first floor, south facade framing the main entrance and one on the west facade. On the second floor there is one window opening centered in the west gable end. Only the simple plank window frames remain today; the windows have been boarded over.

Roof - the roof was covered with cedar shingles during a period of partial restoration.

Chimney - none visible today.

#### INTERIOR

Floor Plan - a single rectangular room, the long dimension running eastward. An enclosed staircase occupies the northeast corner of the room and leads to the second floor hospital area.

The second floor, like the first, is a single rectangular room, with a single window centered on the west gable wall.

Staircase - Enclosed U-shaped staircase and landing 7'-4 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 4'-1 $\frac{3}{8}$ ". The lower stair of six risers is 2'-0" wide, while the upper run of steps, also of six risers, is only 1'-8" in width.

Floor - wood planks.

Wall and Ceiling Finish - exposed log exterior walls and planking of enclosed staircase. The ceiling of the first floor is the wood floor planking of the second floor.

Trim - Simple plank trim for windows and doors. Elaborately hand-carved staircase doorway trim matches the drug cabinet.

Cabinets - The drug cabinet is actually two cabinets framing the exterior east doorway; the north section of the cabinet abuts the staircase doorway.

The two cabinets are connected above the low exterior doorway by a shelf and top trim that runs the full length of the entire cabinet unit. The two side cabinets are identical with four shelves, a single drawer and storage cabinet beneath. The cabinets, as well as other furnishings now stored here, were hand carved and constructed by Father Ravalli.

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#### GENERAL SETTING

The pharmacy is located north of the log chapel of St. Mary's Mission, and situated towards the west end of the chapel. According to early photographs, a group of buildings formerly ran north and south behind (west) of the church forming a sort of street behind the chapel and pharmacy.

Prepared by,

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John N. DeHaas, Jr.  
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May 1967

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DATE: